



The Captain's Lady: Mary Ann Bugg

by

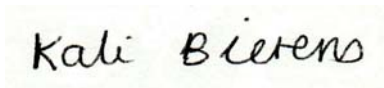
Kali Bierens, Bachelor of Arts

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts with Honours (Aboriginal Studies)

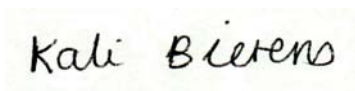
University of Tasmania (October, 2008)

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Kali Bierens

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Abstract

Bushrangers have a powerful grip on the Australian psyche. Ned Kelly is celebrated as Australia's most popular folk hero. Bushranger Captain Thunderbolt has been immortalised in his home state of New South Wales, with a major highway named in his honour. For the town of Uralla in the New England District, the Thunderbolt legend looms large. He is a major tourist draw card for the region. The legend of Thunderbolt embodies a larger telling of a collective struggle against a system of injustice and oppression.

A closer examination of events reveals that Thunderbolt's Aboriginal wife, Mary Ann, was crucial to his survival. Yet she has been erased from the legend. Many of our folk heroes could not have survived without the support of Aboriginal Australians. However the mateship ethos continues to exclude both Aboriginal people and women.

In documenting the life of Worimi woman Mary Ann and her partnership with Thunderbolt, the rhetoric of mateship is challenged. Reciprocal relationships that developed between Aboriginal and settler Australians will be investigated. It is important to consider the range of relationships that emerged on the frontier and the bearing that geography played in such encounters. By adopting a place-centred approach one is able to closely examine the complexity of race relations that existed in colonial times.

The violent encounters that occurred on the frontier between Aboriginal and settler Australians are well documented. However not all relationships were based on exploitation and violence. The union between Mary Ann's Aboriginal mother and English convict father is celebrated by the Worimi today. Mixed

marriage continues to be recognised as a central part of contemporary Worimi culture.

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